

VZCZCXRO6878
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSB #0911/01 3281053
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 241053Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5151
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 3175
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 3287
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1714
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2548
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2917
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 3335
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5783
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2467
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000911

AF/S FOR B. WALCH
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR L.DOBINS AND J. HARMON
COMMERCE FOR ROBERT TELCHIN

SIPDIS

E.O.12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ZIM NOTES 11-23-2009

11. SUMMARY

Topics of the week:

Talks Expected This Weekend...
ZANU-PF Fills Out Top Posts...
Bennett's Trial Begins...
State Continues to Block Release of MDC Official...
Striking Lawyers Protest...
German Priest Assaulted by Soldiers...
Old Cases Against Activists Revived...
Reserve Bank Bill Passes Parliament with Major Concession...
Exorcism for Ghost Workers...
Who's Afraid of the Zim dollar?

On the Political and Social Front

12. Despite a SADC directive laid out in Maputo on November 6, principal negotiators from MDC-T, MDC-M, and ZANU-PF have not yet met to resolve outstanding issues, mostly because the negotiators have not been in Harare at the same time. We expect meetings over the weekend will begin the political dialogue ahead of a visit by South African President Jacob Zuma in the next couple of weeks.

13. The State-owned press announced this week that ZANU-PF filled both vice president positions and the position of national party chairman in advance of the five-year ZANU-PF Congress which was pushed back by a week until December 16 to 20. Vice President Joyce Mujuru retained her seat despite a challenge from Defense Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa, who threw his support behind Oppah Muchinguri. The seat vacated on the death of Joseph Msika in August will be filled by current party chairman John Nkomo. The ambassador to South Africa, Simon Khaya Moyo, will then rotate into the vacant chairmanship. While the Mujuru and Nkomo moves were anticipated, Moyo's appointment was less predictable because there were other more senior candidates contesting for the position. His appointment

also put to rest speculation that the party would terminate the precedent of splitting the top four party positions between ZANU-PF and former PF-ZAPU officials. Moyo is viewed as allied with the Mujuru camp, and his election is seen as a blow to Mnangagwa.

14. The prosecution's case against MDC-T's deputy agriculture minister-designate Roy Bennett began this week. The judge ruled police accounts of statements by alleged co-conspirator Peter Hitschmann implicating Bennett were inadmissible as hearsay. Hitschmann, who was previously acquitted, is expected to testify next week. He has submitted an affidavit to the Court that statements he made to police that he was involved with Bennett in anti-State actions were a result of torture, and that he and Bennett did not conspire to overthrow the government.

15. MDC Transport manager Pascal Gwezere, who was abducted on October 27 and discovered in a Harare jail on October 31, continues to languish in prison as prosecutors fight bail and prison officials refuse to allow access to a private physician. He is reportedly suffering from sepsis in his leg caused by a wound inflicted by security agents. High Court Judge Hungwe is set to rule on Gwezere's bail application on November 20. However, Gwezere's lawyer, Alec Muchadehama, told us that the prosecution is likely to appeal against bail to keep him in prison.

16. On November 16, more than 70 members of the Law Society went on strike and marched through the first downpour of the rainy season in Harare to present a petition of protest to Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa (ZANU-PF) over the harassment, arrest and detention of lawyers, for what the lawyers say is simply carrying

HARARE 00000911 002 OF 003

out their professional duties. Chinamasa was not available. The petition cites the arrest of four lawyers so far this year.

17. On November 15 in Banket, four soldiers violently assaulted a well-known Catholic priest and German citizen, Father Wolfgang Thamm, after they stopped his car. One soldier took his glasses and hit him in the face. The soldiers then forced him to kneel in a puddle of water. When he hesitated, they pushed him into the water and kicked him in his stomach. The German embassy protested the incident to the government.

18. 32 activists from civil society in Gweru have been summoned to appear in court on November 20 over a peaceful demonstration they held in December last year. The activists were arrested on December 3, 2008 and charged with contravening the Public Order and Security Act, but were later released on bail and informed that the court would proceed by way of summons. Now, however, activists are being summoned to appear in court for destruction of property and chanting insults against the person of the president. NGOs and trade unions have reported similar revivals of old cases in recent weeks.

On the Economic and Business Front

19. Parliament passed a bill amending the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Act. The new law will curtail the powers of the central bank governor by setting up of an independent board and confining the bank to dealing with interest rates, currency management, and banking supervision. In exchange for passing the bill, ZANU-PF legislators forced Finance Minister Biti to absolve employees of the bank of any wrongdoing for anything they did "in good faith" and without negligence. In comments to the press, Biti downplayed the immunity deal, saying it did not cover acts of theft or fraud.

110. According to the Director of the Labor and Economic Development Institute of Zimbabwe, the long awaited civil service audit will be conducted between November 30 and December 18 at an estimated cost of US\$4 million. The audit, which will cover all civil servants regulated by the Public Service Act and the Health Services Act but exclude the uniformed forces, is designed to flush out ghost workers

and ZANU-PF supporters who have been receiving salaries without providing any actual service to the state. The audit will require the production of birth certificates, national identity documents, pay slips, letters of appointment, and academic or professional certificates.

¶11. Nearly everyone, it seems. Nine months after the withdrawal of the worthless local currency, many worry that the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe will suddenly revive it. In just the past few days we have had questions about this from bankers, school children, and housewives. During the MDC's recent disengagement from ZANU-PF, there were persistent rumors in Harare that the RBZ had already printed a large quantity of new banknotes (in Mauritius, of all place, in one version of the tale) and had them delivered by airfreight. While the story is hard to swallow, the persistence of such rumors in Harare is good evidence of how fragile the transitional government seems to many people.

Quote of the Week

¶12. "We face very hostile interventions by these states which have imposed unilateral sanctions on us.... this has had a negative

HARARE 00000911 003 OF 003

impact on our farmers who, according to our neo-colonialist enemies, must fail so as to damn the land reforms we have undertaken."
--President Robert Mugabe, speaking at the UN Food Summit in Italy on November 17. Mugabe attended the summit with a delegation of 60 Zimbabweans.

RAY